

So, what's key to attracting and retaining quality employees? And this is for every level, right? Because we need everyone to contribute to the building culture, to contribute to the sense of community that's in a building, and then those buildings make up our community culture that is HSE.

Key aspects for me, as a teacher: I was not trained as a professional teacher. So when I was teaching, I was challenged to be in the classroom, learning my students, learning my material, and taking classes in order to get my educator license.

Support was huge.

And what does that support look like? Well, it depends on the individual, but there are things that we know, across the board, from HR, that are going to make people want to stay, that make people want to, after a terrible day at work, come back the next day.

What does that look like?

That looks like when we are recruiting, that we have honest conversations with people about where they see themselves in three to five years.

The new data suggest that people don't stay in jobs for more than three years now. They are looking for opportunities to advance. They are looking for opportunities to make whatever it is they do their own.

We need to have honest conversations with them about how they fit - or maybe they don't fit, and we find that out early. And where do they want to take their career?

Can we support them in that? I think we absolutely can, but first we need to start with the conversation.

The next thing that I would say is that we need to support people in the community. I, as a person of color, have definite needs. Especially about this hair, okay?

So whenever I'm looking for a position, and if I'm looking to relocate, maybe start a family... do we have assistance for people to relocate? Can we tell them which apartments are nice and which houses are for rent? Or do we have a relationship with people that can help as a relocation service?

Then, are our wages competitive? I know that we have lost bus drivers to other districts because we don't pay what other districts do. And for a community and a school district of this size, we still have to remain competitive. Because good people are going to go to where the money is.

The next thing that I would say that we need to attract and retain good people is the opportunity for advancement. Some people don't want to be a teacher for their entire lives. They want to go back, they want to get their administrator license. They want to have opportunities. They want professional development. They want to learn what other areas of the country are already doing. Indiana is very far behind. There are some very well-educated people that are connected with those areas of study and those specialties that can tell you more about that. What I can tell you from the nursing aspect is that I get professional development through my employer. I'm allowed to attend conferences as part of my employment, and those things help to keep me engaged with what is happening in the field that I am currently working in. You need to have a connection.

Do we have mentors? This is especially important for people of color. A mentor is someone that can help you on that path. Avoid missteps, maybe take a different direction, so that you don't have the same pitfalls. Maybe to help you reframe and really put things in perspective. When you feel like you are just down on yourself, and you know "I'm really failing my students" or something like that, we say "absolutely not". And this is why - this is what happened to me. We pick them up, dust them off, and send them back.

When people are supported, they will do magnificent things for you and they will continue to show up. We need engagement. We need support. We need opportunities for advancement. And that's at every level. That's from the bus monitor, to the bus driver, to the custodian, the nurses, the teachers, the administrators. Everyone plays a part and we need for everyone to feel valued, welcomed, and able to contribute. .